

Legislature *notebook*

Bill addressing teen-smoking to governor's desk

A bill aimed at combating teen smoking was passed by the Legislature on Friday and has been submitted to Gov. Mike Johanns for his signature or veto.

LB1436, introduced Jan. 20 by Sen. Ardyce Bohlke of Hastings, would implement a program that asks high school students to come up with ideas on how to prevent and stop teen smoking.

Designers of the winning propos-

al would receive a \$5,000 scholarship to be used at any of Nebraska's public or private postsecondary institutions, Bohlke said.

Bohlke's bill would be funded with \$500,000 in settlement money from tobacco companies.

"I'm excited," she said. "I would have loved to have gone for \$7 million, but it was a battle to get \$500,000."

Originally, the bill would have been funded by increased cigarette taxes, but Bohlke said she was pleased things turned out the way they did.

"We were able to come together and realize we would accomplish the same thing (by using settlement money)," she said.

Teaching bill advances

Thoughts of improving teachers' salaries and encouraging young people to enter the teaching field were in lawmakers' minds Friday as they advanced a bill that would create a task force to study teachers' pay.

LB1399, introduced Jan. 20 by Sen. Ardyce Bohlke of Hastings, moved from the second round of debate to final reading.

The bill originally offered an annual bonus for teachers who complete a national accreditation program. Senators decided to remove the section that gives money to certified teachers because there are only eight nationally accredited teachers in Nebraska.

Teachers who complete the accreditation program will still be recognized but will not receive monetary awards until funding is added into the state's budget, Bohlke said.

The bill also creates a loan forgiveness program for students who enter teaching fields where there is a shortage of teachers, such as industrial technology, music and math.

If students become teachers in Nebraska schools, one year of their student loans could be forgiven for each year they teach, Bohlke said.

"(The bill) helps attract teachers to Nebraska, especially graduates coming out of school who can apply for loan forgiveness," she said.

Compiled by staff writer Jill Zeman

Last year's parties reflect on election's eccentricities

Candidates in the 1999 ASUN campaign said the four parties sparked talk and involvement.

By Veronica Daehn

Staff writer

In an ASUN election that saw two "traditional" parties take on a couple of unknown underdogs, one would expect the end to have been predictable.

Not this year. Nearly three weeks after Joel Schafer and Riley Peterson of the A-Team defeated Empower executive candidates Heath Mello and Cecily Rometo, last year's players in the ASUN election spoke out about the results.

Association of Students of the University of Nebraska President Andy Schuerman said he was surprised at the success of A-Team.

"With the obvious success of A-Team, their atypical background ... was overall a good thing," Schuerman said. "They brought in some new energy."

Another of the underdog parties was Duff, led by presidential candidate Jason Kidd.

Impact executive candidates John Conley and Brad Bangs were eliminated, along with Duff, March 1 after they failed to make the run-off election.

A run-off was held March 8 because no party garnered enough votes to officially win the election a week earlier.

Schuerman and First Vice President Rachelle Winkle defeated Focus candidates Paul Schreier and Jon England in a run-off last spring.

Having four parties in the election this year made it interesting but not necessarily better, Schuerman said.

There was less fighting between the parties this year because their messages were similar, he said.

On the other hand, Schuerman said, there were not as many people involved with each party because the students who got involved had four parties to choose from.

Because of the lower numbers of people, the advertising efforts of the parties were not as concentrated this year, he said, and it was more difficult to recruit students to be involved.

The extra parties did bring in people not normally involved with ASUN, though, Schuerman said.

"There was less emotional stress and strain on personal relations this year," he said. "Because there were more options and different types of parties, there was more of a sense of 'We're in this together.'"

ASUN Second Vice President Trisha Meuret ran under the Focus party last year. She said she was thankful she didn't have to deal with the election this year.

"It was a relief not to be a part of it," Meuret said. "Not that I didn't have

a great time last year, but it's tiring." Meuret said having four parties in the race "really shook things up."

It encouraged people who had never voted before to vote, she said.

"Having four parties was a great thing," she said. "Anytime you have more people interested in helping the university, it can't be bad."

Meuret also said she thought some students voted in the election because of things ASUN did this year that those students disagreed with.

In February, ASUN senators passed a bill that allowed them to lobby the Legislature against LB1405, a bill that would ban the use of aborted fetal tissue in research at state institutions, such as the University of Nebraska Medical Center.

Several students attended ASUN meetings to voice their concerns over the bill.

Because of this, Schuerman agreed that more students realized they should vote this year.

There was more publicity about ASUN programs like NU on Wheels and ASUN legislation on controversial issues such as domestic partner benefits and fetal tissue research, he said.

"(These things) made students aware of the authority that's vested in ASUN student government," Schuerman said.

Both Schuerman and Meuret credited the Daily Nebraskan for publicizing and influencing this year's election.

Schuerman said the Daily Nebraskan editorial board embraced A-Team's reform mentality, and that helped them win the election.

"It's very clear that the Daily Nebraskan has a significant influence," Schuerman said. "I hope that the editorial staff's support of (the A-Team) doesn't end. It's important they remain interested."

Schreier blamed the Daily Nebraskan for categorizing the parties this year.

He said Empower and Impact should not have been deemed the establishment parties, and A-Team and Duff should not have been tagged non-traditional.

"If A-Team and Duff hadn't been portrayed as non-establishment parties, who would have thought they were non-establishment parties?" Schreier said. "The Daily Nebraskan solely did that."

Schreier said he was disappointed in this year's candidates and did not support any of them.

A lot of qualified candidates have

become disenchanted with the election process, he said, because of unpredictable, outside factors like press coverage.

"It's still a crap-shoot as to who wins," Schreier said. "That has frustrated a lot of good candidates. So much depends on the way the DN reports."

A-Team's victory was not a surprise, though, Schreier said.

"A-Team didn't necessarily deserve to win, but maybe some other parties deserved to lose," he said. "It will be interesting to see what happens."

Schreier said A-Team had good, insightful ideas, but their lack of experience would hurt.

"Schafer doesn't know how to be a regent," Schreier said.

With Schafer's administration, students will get to see what sort of checks-and-balance system is in place within the senate and the university administration.

Meuret said she was impressed by Schafer and the rest of the A-Team.

She said she talked with Schafer and A-Team's Second Vice Presidential candidate Joel Webber three weeks before the election.

"I really like them," Meuret said. "They're not traditional, and that's one of the reasons why they're so appealing."

Schuerman said he hopes A-Team's victory will encourage others to get involved.

"I'm hopeful this will engender in students the feeling of 'I can do it, too,'" Schuerman said. "But I'm cautiously optimistic about (the emergence of 'non-traditional' parties). I'll have to see it to believe it."

Despite A-Team's victory, Schuerman said there would not be a drastic change in ASUN because it is not possible. Students will still be involved in administrative decisions, he said, because that's the way the system is set up.

"(Students) will still be sitting next to the administration," he said. "We have an amazing connection with the decision-making process here. Those things will lend themselves to there not being a revolution in ASUN."

Schuerman said Schafer will realize that soon after he takes office this week.

Meuret said A-Team's victory should be inspirational to other "non-traditional" students who want to get involved.

"I hope this will pave the way for outside groups to come in," she said.

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